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President-Elect Candidate

Written Statement

The pandemic has increased inequities in academic progress and mental health services for our students. What is NASP's responsibility in addressing these inequities and what will you do as NASP President to address these needs?

It is incumbent upon NASP and school psychologists to address the inequities that have worsened since the pandemic. We are responsible for naming the inequities and offering solutions to address the academic and mental health service inequities that our students have faced. During the pandemic, Barr said, "I heard that we are in the same boat. But it is not that. We are in the same storm, but not in the same boat (Haley, 2020)". While we were all ships in the sea, some of us rode out the storm in yachts while others were in small boats, and sadly, many others were in the water holding onto driftwood. This analogy helped me, and others understand that the impact of the pandemic was uneven and hurt our most marginalized students the worst. Did you have students who were at home and had to care for their siblings while also trying to learn when schools were closed? Did you have families without computers or wifi, so their children could not stay connected to school during closure? Did the mental health needs of your students increase exponentially during COVID and upon school reopening? A recent report entitled, The Education in a Pandemic: The Disparate Impacts of COVID-19 on America's Students from the Department of Education, Office for Civil Rights highlights the disparity that COVID has caused. A few highlights in the report include the disparities caused by the lack of access to technology, services, and instruction that has led to widened academic disparities and an increasing need for mental health services. The report also indicated that students' psychological and physical health suffered as students lost access to school, which is a safe place for many students. Specifically noted is the toll this took on LGBTQ students, who can often find affinity groups that help them feel validated and included. Fortunately, NASP is positioned to provide leadership, support, and resources in various ways.

NASP has an ethical obligation to respond and NASP's strategic goals of social justice, shortages, and use of the practice model all call on the NASP to address these disparities. NASP can share resources and information broadly. NASP has a wide range of high-quality professional development learning and resources. The NASP Online Learning Center has many professional development opportunities that offer resources and interventions to address the need. As an example, there are more than 40 training on mental and behavioral health and risk behaviors. NASP also has a wide range of resources to raise awareness about the needs and the inequities.

As NASP president, there are things I could do to help. To begin, I must first center my leadership in amplifying the voices and needs of others. As NASP President, it is my role to move from awareness to action. I can support school psychologists in being agents of change who use their skills to be professional problem-solvers. Another part of my role would be to raise the voices of our most marginalized students, our under-resourced schools, and our overworked school psychologists. I can speak with partners, stakeholders, and policymakers to help them understand the needs and the resources required to meet them. At the state level, I can work with delegates and state association presidents to have bi-directional conversations about the specific needs of states. Collaboratively,
we can then identify potential supports and available resources. The NASP President has a unique opportunity to share success stories and tangible outcomes among school psychologists nationwide. Sharing lived experiences and proven strategies allows school psychologists to harness the creativity of others facing the same issues.

A final thought is that the NASP president can promote self-care and wellness for our members and volunteer leaders. Our job has never been more complex, and we must look out for our wellness and the wellness of our peers.

References
